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TRAFFIC(U.S.A.)

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND-U.S.

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MONITORING WILDLIFE TRADE ENHANCES CONSERVATION AWARENESS

by

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TRAFFIC (U.S.A.) — Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce — is a Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Its function is to monitor the international trade in wildlife and plants. TRAFFIC (U.S.A.) is funded by World Wildlife Fund-U.S.

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Nicole Duplaix[1] and David Mack[2]

TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce) is a Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). TRAFFIC's function is to monitor the trade of wildlife and plants. Its structure is that of an information network consisting of an international office located in Cambridge, England, called the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit (WTMU) and of individual TRAFFIC units established at a national or regional level (U.S., Kenya, West Germany, and others soon in Japan and Australia).

BACKGROUND

TRAFFIC's potential usefulness was realized when the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) came into force on 1 July 1975. This placed a special emphasis on the existing need to closely monitor the international trade in wildlife and plants which the IUCN/SSC had already recognized in 1972 when it created TRAFFIC's predecessor, the Animal Trade Information Service (ATIS). TRAFFIC became an IUCN/SSC Specialist Group in 1975, to gather trade data and assess its impact on the status of species in the wild. Its role is to scrutinize international trade routes to identify the movements of legal, and sometimes illegal trade taken in contravention of CITES or national regulations. The strongest emphasis was placed on objectivity and scientific methodology - TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade data center, not a radical watchdog group out to discredit wildlife users.

To extend this monitoring effort further, TRAFFIC(U.S.A.) was established in April 1979. We are funded by the World Wildlife Fund-U.S.

FUNCTIONS

Due to our ties with the IUCN and the World Wildlife Fund, TRAFFIC plays many roles. First and foremost, we produce trade reports with a wide distribution to government agencies here and abroad, the CITES Secretariat, conservation organizations, and other interested institutions and individuals. Since monitoring the wildlife trade is a relatively new science, the identification and volume of wildlife species in trade has been given first priority. The data gathered from our analysis are then passed on

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to members of the SSC Specialist Groups and other scientists to determine also whether the trade in a species is detrimental to the wild populations or legislation is needed for its protection.

For instance, TRAFFIC(U.S.A.)'s parrot trade report was used to defend the listing of all non-endangered psittacines on CITES Appendix II. The report contained detailed information on the voluminous trade covering 133 parrot species entering the U.S. from 48 countries. While the U.S. government did not defend this position, the third world countries, where the birds originate, were unanimous in their wish to list parrots on Appendix II. The final vote - 32 in favor of listing the Order, 4 against (including the U.S.).

A spin-off of TRAFFIC's data gathering activities involves the illegal trade. Smuggling is often uncovered simply by analyzing the given range of a species and the trade routes used to export it from the country of origin to its final destination. For instance, in our parrot trade report, endemic Brazilian conures were imported from Paraguay and Bolivia; however, Brazil banned the commercial export of all wildlife in 1967. Such dealings are not restricted to South America; in Southeast Asia, Indonesia prohibits the export of both Sulphur-crested cockatoos and Eclectus parrots, but several countries, including Singapore, Sweden and West Germany, re-exported them to the U.S., listing Indonesia as the "country of origin". Also, Thailand exported 16 Palm cockatoos to the U.S., a species protected and banned from commercial trade throughout its range in Indonesia, Australia, and Papua New Guinea. The Philippines and West Germany also re-exported these birds listing Thailand as the "country of origin".

The U.S. government's enforcement of the Lacey Act, one of the laws covering the above violations, has been severely hampered by the lack of knowledge of the latest wildlife trade laws of the exporting countries. For example, is a 1972 Central American Presidential decree banning all wildlife trade still in effect when the president is ousted in 1976? The IUCN Law Office in Bonn has been compiling and computerizing all wildlife and environmental laws. When finished, a simple entry of an animal or plant species will provide a list of countries which protect it under what law or decree. Until such time as this source can be fully utilized, TRAFFIC contacts CITES Management Authorities and government agencies, etc., to check wildlife laws or verify the regulations already in our files.

So TRAFFIC uses trade statistics, import forms and other verifiable sources of information to compile data on a given taxa in trade. We are extremely careful how we compile and analyze our information; we have found, for instance, that the wildlife trade data we gather for the same time period from different agencies such as Law Enforcement, Customs, and the Wildlife Permit Office

rarely agree. Which figure should we use? Rather than trust second-hand information, our staff also checks each wildlife 3-177 wildlife import document - there were 52,000 of them last year. This first-hand information has greatly enhanced our understanding of the international wildlife trade picture, and that way we come as close as we can to being 100% accurate. There is however a sign hanging in our office to remind us that "There is nothing so satisfying to the mind of the reader as precise numbers and nothing so little deserving of his confidence."[1] Deserving our readers' confidence is very important to us.

After this introduction to why and how TRAFFIC operates, I'd like to give a short synopsis of some of the latest wildlife trade reports on live primates, psittacines, reptiles, and tropical fish.

PRIMATES

This report will actually be a chapter in a book edited jointly by the IUCN/SSC TRAFFIC and Primate Specialist Groups which will cover the primate trade, status of species, captive breeding programs, and government procurement procedures.

The number of primates being imported by the U.S. declined from over 100,000 per year in the early 1960s, to just over 20,000 a year in 1979 and 1980. In addition, the number of species imported has dropped from 106 from 1968 to 1972, down to 68 species from 1976 to 1980 (Table 1). There are five reasons for this:
1) In 1975, the Public Health Service banned pet primate imports which eliminated most South American species imported for the pet trade.
2) Under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, and subsequent listing under the Act, many endangered species could no longer be imported commercially.
3) In 1975, CITES was implemented and it also protects endangered primates from entering trade. Much overlap exists with listed species on CITES Appendix I and the U.S. Endangered Species Act.
4) Several countries over the last 15 years have instituted complete or partial wildlife trade bans which include primates. Three of these countries, India, Peru, and Colombia, provided about 75% of the primates to the U.S. in the early 1970s.
5) The inflationary cost of primates and increased number of captive breeding colonies in the U.S. have reduced somewhat the demand for primates in the biomedical and pharmaceutical community.

Preliminary range discrepancy analysis shows that over 600 Common marmosets (Callithrix jacchus) entered the U.S. from Paraguay between 1978 and 1980. This species only occurs in Brazil where it is fully protected. Illegal wildlife trade from Paraguay on a large scale (which included birds, reptiles, and mammals) was uncovered last year by the CITES Secretariat. As a result, no common marmosets have entered the U.S. since June 1980.

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1. W. H. Prescott. History of the Conquest of Peru. 1975.

PSITTACINES

During the nine month period, October 1979 to June 1980, over 200,000 psittacines were imported into the U.S. This involves 133 species, originating in 50 countries, and covers 40% of all parrot species. Parrots make up just over 45% of all birds imported into the U.S. Regionally, parrots make up over 99% of birds exported from the Neotropics, 20% of all bird imports from Asia, and 30% of all bird imports from Africa (Table 2).

Most parrots imported by the U.S. came from South and Central America (95,000) and Africa (80,000); however, 56% of the parrots exported from Africa were captive bred cockatiels exported from South Africa (Table 3).

The parrot report illustrates that over 37% (or 75,000) of all psittacines imported by the U.S. during the nine month period came from countries other than their true country of origin. Of these only 30,000 were declared as either captive bred or re-exports. While many of the remaining 45,000 were cockatiels and budgerigars that were certainly captive bred, other species were transhipped and originated in countries that protect them.

REPTILES

In 1980, over 400,000 live reptiles were exported to the U.S. Less than 2% were imported for scientific or non-commercial purposes. More than 500 species were imported from 48 countries; the two largest were Guatemala (125,000) and Thailand (108,000) which exported over half of all imports (Table 4).

TROPICAL FISH

The number of tropical fish imported into the U.S. has increased from under 100 million per year in the early 1970s to approximately 150 million in 1979. The majority are freshwater species that are captive bred on fish farms in Southeast Asia. In addition, Florida fish farmers estimate they sell 150 - 200 million freshwater fish annually. As a result, keeping tropical fish is the third largest hobby in the U.S.

CITES AND TRAFFIC

CITES has effectively slowed the commercial trade in endangered species; however, permits are easily obtained for several hundred species listed on CITES Appendix II (threatened), and very few biologists are out in the field determining if the trade in these species is detrimental to the wild populations.

In addition, another grave problem looms ahead: fewer countries are being called upon to supply the growing demands of the live wildlife and product trade. Over the last 15 years, several countries, which were once large wildlife exporters , banned the commercial trade of all or some wildlife species including Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Australia, Papua New Guinea, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. For example, 83% of the primates imported by the U.S. in 1980 came from only 5 countries (Table 5). Similarly, 10 countries exported 85% of the parrots sent to the U.S., and 7 countries supplied 88% of the reptiles to the U.S. Very few field studies on these species, if any, have been carried out recently in the countries involved. So the goose that laid the golden egg may become extinct before the situation can be rectified.

WHAT TRAFFIC CAN DO FOR AAZPA MEMBERS

Now that I've thoroughly numbed your brain with statistics, let's talk about TRAFFIC's relationship with zoos. Most of our staff, including myself, were trained in zoos and we are anxious to share our data with you in a meaningful way. We are all aware that the orientation of both zoos and TRAFFIC is wildlife conservation and education. Many of the species presently maintained in zoos have become (or are in the process of becoming) endangered by trade, be it as crocodile bags or hyacinth macaws for television commercials. Conservation themes and displays to educate the misguided consumers looking into a crocodile exhibit could be underlined by facts and figures about the world trade. Some zoos already have such graphics, but the information valid 3 years ago may now need updating.

TRAFFIC(U.S.A.) has just initiated a series of wildlife trade fact sheets for educational purposes. A prototype sheet on elephant ivory is available. It lists U.S. imports in relation to world trade, legislation protecting the African and Asian elephants , average tusk weights and market value. Future fact sheets will discuss parrots, sea turtles, and even the obscure pangolin skin trade (the U.S. imported over 31,000 skins in 1980 for the cowboy boot industry). We offer these to zoos along with our Newsletter as an educational tool to distribute to docents and school groups. The AAZPA has included conservation and education programs in its sphere of interest for years. Wildlife trade evaluation and information plays an important role in monitoring the world's renewable resources, and more people need to be made aware of it.

CONCLUSIONS

What can we conclude from all this? I hope that we are beginning to have a better idea of what animals are going where

and the numbers involved. TRAFFIC is part of the solution of the IUCN World Conservation Strategy in carefully managing our not-so-renewable resources. We provide the base-line information for others to act upon, be it the producers or consumers or legislators who can then loosen or tighten controls. Zoos can and should also play a key role in making sure these facts and figures reach the right people: the soon-to-be consumers and their parents. We are here to inform and to help. Use us.

TABLE 1

U.S. IMPORTS OF PRIMATES

FAMILY	1968 - 1972	1976 - 1980
TUPAIIDAE	2,699	3,071
INDRIIDAE	11	0
LEMURIDAE	138	13
LORISIDAE	1,488	856
TARSIIDAE	1	0
CEBIDAE	253,271	13,911
CALLITRICHIDAE	30,372	8,203
CERCOPITHECIDAE	171,121	91,944
HYLOBATIDAE	753	7
PONGIDAE	1,201	82
UNIDENTIFIED PRIMATES	47	162
TOTAL	461,102	118,249
NO. OF SPECIES	106	68

Source: 1968-1972, Mammals Imported into the United States, Special Scientific Reports - Wildlife, FWS, USDI.

1976-1980, TRAFFIC(U.S.A.) analysis of 3-177 Declaration of Importation documents, FWS, USDI.

TABLE 2

ORIGIN OF LIVE BIRD IMPORTS INTO THE UNITED STATES
(October 1979 - June 1980)

REGION	PSITTACINES	ALL BIRDS	PERCENT OF PSITTACINES
PACIFIC	4,640	5,658	82.0%
ASIA-MIDDLE EAST	9,434	46,319	20.4%
AFRICA	82,801	270,919	30.6%
NEW WORLD	95,045	95,691	99.3%
EUROPE & CANADA	9,433	23,281	40.5%
UNKNOWN	343	367	93.5%
TOTAL	201,696	442,235	45.6%

Source: U.S. Imports of Psittacines, TRAFFIC(U.S.A.)

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF PSITTACINES IMPORTED INTO THE U.S. BY GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

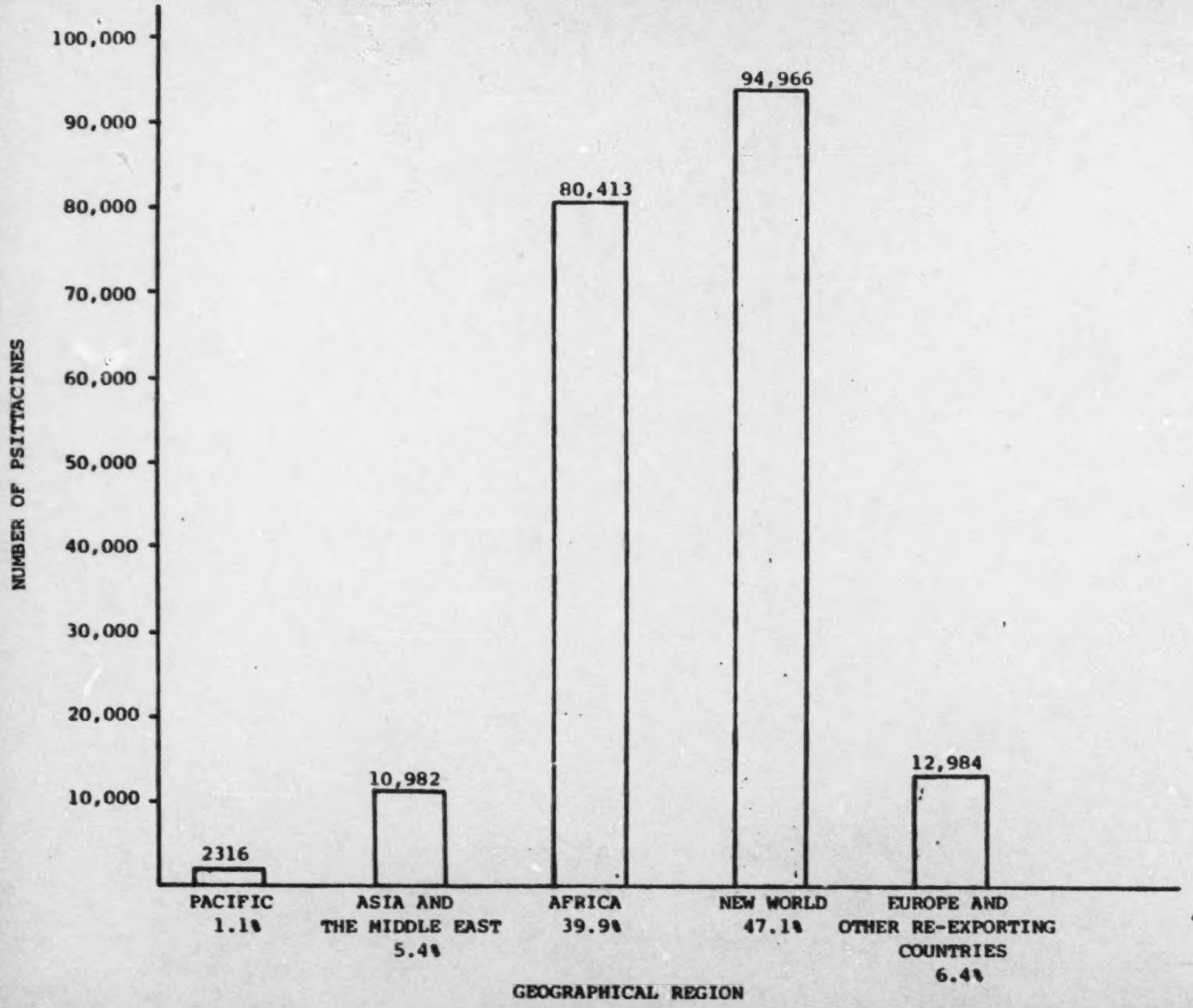

TABLE 4

1980

U.S. IMPORTS OF LIVE REPTILES

BY GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

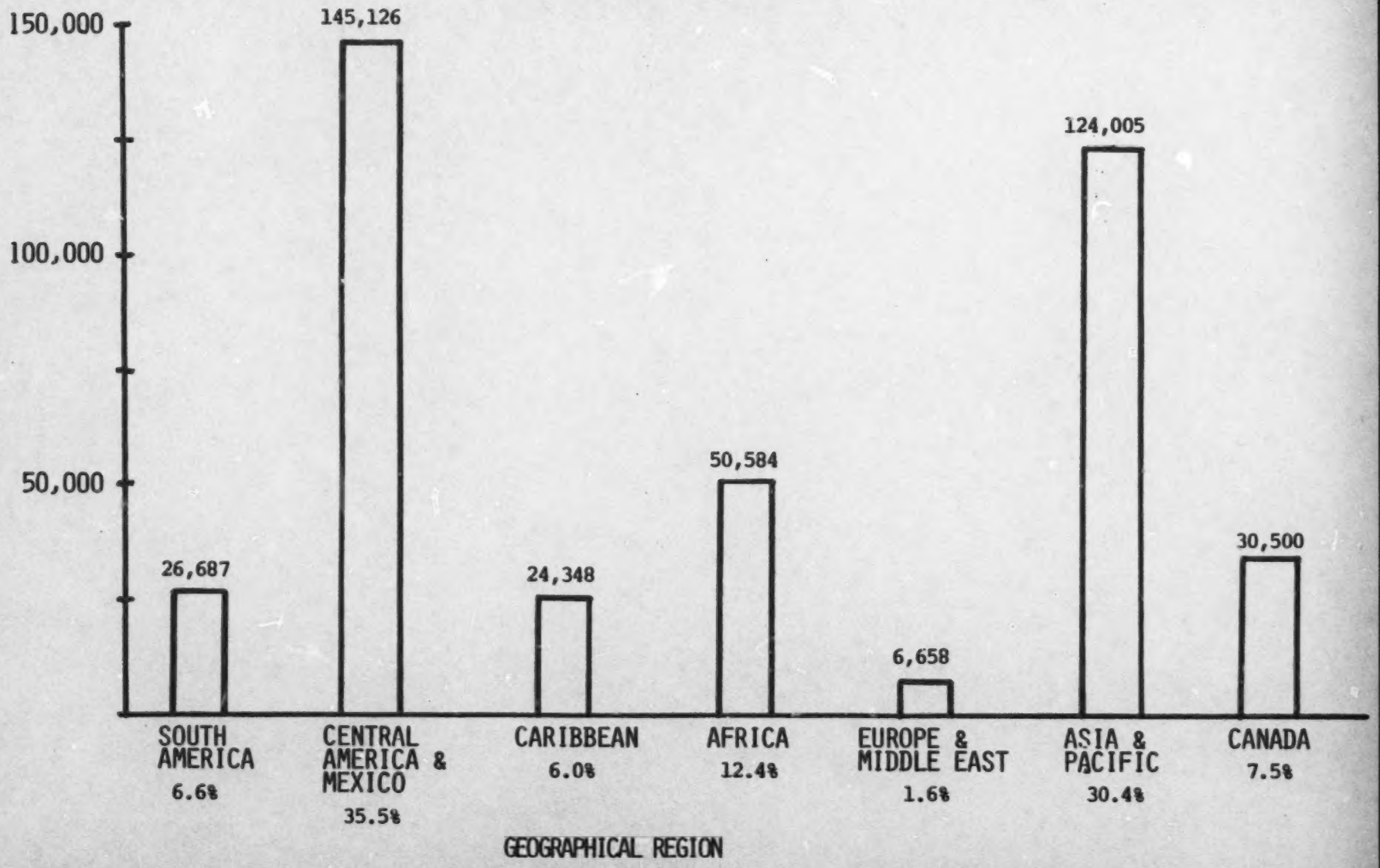

TABLE 5

MAJOR EXPORTERS OF LIVE WILDLIFE TO THE U.S. IN 1980

EXPORTING COUNTRY	QUANTITY PRIMATES	PSITTACINES*	REPTILES
CHINA		8,066#	
INDONESIA	5,066		
PHILIPPINES	6,693		
THAILAND			108,826
KENYA	1,210		38,728
SENEGAL		8,251	
SOMALIA	1,456		
SOUTH AFRICA		48,266#	
TANZANIA		19,213	
ARGENTINA		10,438	
BOLIVIA	2,564	15,022	
GUATEMALA			125,906
GUYANA		10,193	18,359
HAITI			24,264
HONDURAS			13,664
MEXICO		22,226	
PERU		14,132	
URUGUAY		16,000	
CANADA			30,500
TOTAL	16,989 (5 countries)	171,807 (10 countries)	360,247 (7 countries)
TOTAL EXPORTS	20,368 (33 countries)	201,696 (48 countries)	408,129 (48 countries)
% of TOTAL EXPORTS	83%	85%	88%

* Nine month period from October 1979 - June 1980. The number of primates and reptiles represent totals for the entire year 1980.

\# Most of these are captive bred budgerigars and cockatiels.